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Paid and unpaid work over three generations

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Standard symbols for Statistics Canada

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where a meaningful distinction exists between true zero and the value rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

Highlights

In this issue

Paid and unpaid work over three generations

- The study examines the profile and the time spent on paid and unpaid work for young adults from three generations—late baby boomers (born from 1957 to 1966) when they were age 20 to 29 in 1986, Generation X (1969 to 1978) which was in that age group in 1998, and Generation Y (1981 to 1990) which reached it in 2010.
- Young adults from Generation Y were more likely to be single (67%), living at home (51%), and going to school (19%) compared with their counterparts in the two previous generations.
- Time spent on employment and housework was also most alike for young men and women of Generation Y. At ages 20 to 29, late baby boom men did, on average, 1.4 hours more paid work per day than women. In Generation Y, this difference had narrowed to 1.1 hours.
- When late baby boomer women were age 20 to 29, they did 1.2 hours more housework per day than men. By the time Generation Y was the same age, the difference had narrowed to 0.4 hours.
- Average daily time spent on paid work and housework by men and women in young dual-earner couples is more alike for those without children and particularly so for Generation Y.

Perspectives

Paid and unpaid work over three generations

Katherine Marshall

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Most adults spend years working at a paid job and working at home to maintain and run a household. Many factors influence the amount and type of paid and unpaid household labour performed, including where people are in the life cycle, the economy, their family status and social expectations. Understanding the distribution and division of paid and unpaid work over the life course helps with the development of workplace and family-related programs and policies.

Although a division of labour still exists within families, the hours of paid work, average earnings, and time spent on domestic labour and child care are becoming more alike between spouses in Canada and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Kan et al. 2011; Marshall 2009 and 2006). A parallel narrowing of the housework gap has been found among Canadian teenage boys and girls (Marshall 2007).

These findings suggest that the division of labour and role expectations for men and women are continuing to evolve. This may be especially true for Generation Y, those born between 1980 and 1995, who grew up during a period of changing family dynamics and family formation. Their baby boomer parents, born and raised after the Second World War, were predominantly dual earners and a substantial number of mothers were the primary earners (Sussman and Bonnell 2006). Furthermore, during Generation Y's childhood, some of their fathers were likely to have taken paid parental leave, a program that was introduced and offered to fathers for the first time in 1990.

Age cohorts exposed to the same historical and cultural phenomena tend to share similar points of view (Ryder 1965). Furthermore, the development of generational attitudes and behaviours are thought to be created in the formative years and often stabilize in adulthood (Williams and Davidson 1996; van den Broek 1999). Has being raised in a dual-earner culture influenced how the men and women of Generation Y participate in paid and unpaid household work? Has the division of labour within couples of this generation continued to converge?

This article uses data from the 1986, 1998 and 2010 General Social Survey (GSS) on Time Use to examine changes in the participation in and time spent on paid work and unpaid household work of individuals age 20 to 29 from three generations—late baby boomers and those in Generations X and Y (see *Three generations* and *Data source and definitions*). This age range is selected so that Generation Y can be included in the study. The 2010 data offer a first-time opportunity to examine the time use of Generation Y—a group now in early adulthood. The final section looks at the distribution of time spent on paid and unpaid work within dual-earner couples.

More of Generation Y living in parent's home

A profile of late baby boomers and Generations X and Y shows that several socio-economic characteristics have changed considerably from one generation to the next (Table 1). Some noteworthy generational differences include the following:

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- **Living in a couple is less common:** The percentage of 20- to 29-year-olds married or living common-law[2] has dropped substantially from 48% of late baby boomers to 37% for Generation X and 33% for Generation Y. This finding is consistent with the well-documented increase in the average age of first marriage for both men and women over the past few decades (Statistics Canada 2009).
- **Fewer have children:** Postponed marriage is linked to postponed parenthood. In 1986, 29% of late baby boomers age 20 to 29 had children compared with 19% for Generation Y in 2010.
- **Employment rate is converging between men and women:** Almost three-quarters of those in their 20s reported being employed in the three years under study; but while men had a 10% higher employment rate than women in 1986, their rate was only 3% higher in 2010.

Table 1 Profile of late baby boomers and Generations X and Y at ages 20 to 29

	Late baby boomers (born 1957 to 1966)	Generation X (born 1969 to 1978)	Generation Y (born 1981 to 1990)
		'000	
Total population	**4,552**	**4,186**	**4,663**
		%	
Sex			
Men	51	50	51
Women	49	50	49
Age			
20 to 24 years	50	48	49
25 to 29 years	50	52	51
Marital status			
Married/common-law	48	37	33
Single	50	61	67
Other	F	F	F
Has children	29	22	19
Employment rate			
Both sexes	73	72	74
Men	78	76	75
Women	68	69	72
Student			
Both sexes	15	18	19
Men	16	20	19
Women	13	17	20
Lives at home with one or both parents			
All ages (20 to 29 years)	28	31	51
20 to 24 years	43	46	73
25 to 29 years	12	17	30
Immigrant	11	16	18
Reports no religion	14	25	35

Sources: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey and Labour Force Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

- **Staying in school longer:** Among late baby boomers, 15% reported their main activity was going to school, compared with 18% for Generation X and 19% for Generation Y. The proportion attending school has increased more for women than men.
- **More are living at home with their parents:** The percentage point increase of young adults living at home with their parents was particularly steep between Generation X and Y, up from 31% in 1998 to 51% in 2010. The upward trend to live at home longer is apparent among both the 20-to-24 and 25-to-29 age groups.[3]
- **Immigrant population is increasing:** The proportion of young adults who were born outside Canada has increased steadily. In 1986, 11% of late baby boomers were born outside Canada compared with 16% for Generation X and 18% for Generation Y. This trend is consistent with the increasing number of immigrants since the 1990s (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011).
- **Less religious affiliation:** Religiosity has decreased substantially among young adults. While 14% of late baby boomers reported having no religion, more than one-third (35%) of Generation Y did so.

Time spent at paid and unpaid work similar across the generations

Despite the varying socioeconomic characteristics of the three generations, findings from the GSS time use surveys indicate that, overall, the participation in and time spent

Three generations

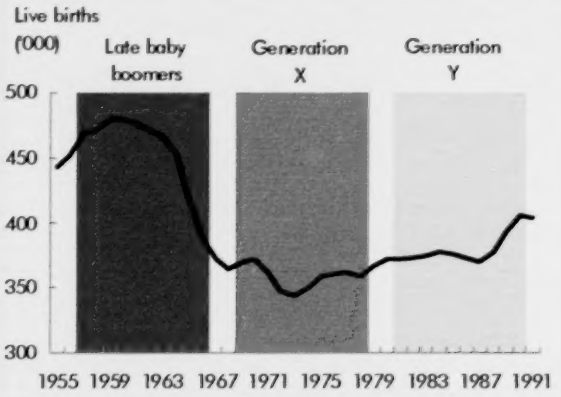
Through the works of economist David Foot and author Douglas Coupland, most people are aware of the generation to which they belong. The baby boom generation, born between 1947 and 1966, is probably the best known, but much has been written about the baby bust (1967 to 1979) and echo boom (1980 to 1995) generations, also known as Generations X and Y (Foot 1998; Coupland 1991).

Generations are delineations of birth years based on distinct historical periods. They include people born during a similar economic and cultural time period, which helps shape attitudes and behaviours. Studying generational differences improves insight into potential future social and economic change. According to Foot, demographic dynamics explain "two-thirds of everything" including consumer behaviour, demand for services, education and family formation, all of which can influence public policy (Foot 1998).

This study examines trends in time spent on paid and unpaid work for the three generations when they were between the ages of 20 and 29. This age range was chosen for comparability purposes and because it is roughly the age range of Generation Y in 2010. The timing of the previous time use surveys also makes this study possible. For example, in 1986 (the first year of the Canadian GSS on Time Use) late baby boomers[1] who were born between 1956 and 1966 were age 20 to 30. Therefore, for comparability, late baby boomers born between 1957 and 1966 are included in the study as this represents the 20-to-29 age group in 1986. The 1998 GSS on Time Use is used to examine Generation X. Although this generation's birth years range from 1967 to 1979, the study includes the years 1969 to 1978 as this represents those who were age 20 to 29 in 1998. Finally, those born between 1981 and 1990 are selected from the 2010 GSS on Time Use to represent Generation Y at age 20 to 29.

Late baby boomers were part of the second wave of the baby boom and included the peak years of the annual birth rate (Chart A). Between 1957 and 1966 there were approximately 4.6 million births in Canada. The introduction of the birth control pill and the increased involvement of women in the labour market have been linked to the substantial fall in the birth rate starting in the 1960s (Foot 1998). Between 1969 and 1978, there were 3.6 million births, and between 1981 and 1990 there were 3.8 million births. The total population by birth year changes over time as deaths and emigration occur and as immigrants arrive.

Chart A The annual number of births was highest for late baby boomers



Note: Shaded areas represent selected birth years of the generations under study. Based on these birth years, in 1986, 1998 and 2010, late baby boomers, and Generation X and Generation Y, respectively, were age 20 to 29.
Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics.

on paid work and unpaid household activities is roughly similar across the years. Averaged over the week, 24-hour diary data show that about one-half of young adults age 20 to 29 in all three periods (1986, 1998 and 2010) worked at a job the day they were interviewed, and more than three-quarters did some form of unpaid household work including housework, child care or shopping for goods and services (Table 2). At 47%, the daily participation rate in paid work was lowest for Generation Y.

In terms of unpaid household work, daily participation is consistently highest for housework, which increased from 63% among late baby boomers in 1986 to 70% among Generation Y in 2010, and relatively low for child care (roughly 1 in 5) and shopping and services (roughly 2 in 5). Participation in child care is low for all three generations because only a minority of those age 20 to 29 had children.

Among those who participated in the selected activities on Diary Day, on average much more time was

Table 2 Participation in and time spent on selected activities for late baby boomers and Generations X and Y at ages 20 to 29

	Late baby boomers (ref.) (born 1957 to 1966)	Generation X (ref.) (born 1969 to 1978)	Generation Y (born 1981 to 1990)
	average hours per day		
Total population			
Paid work	4.3	4.7	4.1*
Unpaid work	2.6	2.7	2.6
Housework	1.3	1.3	1.2
Child care	0.6	0.6	0.6
Shopping for goods and services	0.8	0.8	0.8
Participants on Diary Day			
Paid work	8.5	8.8	8.7
Unpaid work	3.5	3.1	3.2**
Housework	2.1	1.7	1.7**
Child care	2.4	2.6	3.0***
Shopping for goods and services	2.1	1.9	1.9
Participation		%	
Paid work	51	53	47***
Unpaid work	76	86	81***
Housework	63	77	70***
Child care	23	23	20**
Shopping for goods and services	36	41	39

(ref.) = reference group
* statistically significant difference for Generation Y from Generation X at $p < 0.05$
** statistically significant difference for Generation Y from late baby boomers at $p < 0.05$
*** statistically significant difference for Generation Y from both Generation X and late baby boomers at $p < 0.05$
Note: Time per day and participation rates are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

spent on paid work (ranging from 8.5 to 8.8 hours per day) than unpaid work (ranging from 3.1 to 3.5 hours per day). Two notable changes between 1986 and 2010 include a significant decrease in the average time spent by participants on housework, down from 2.1 to 1.7 hours, and an increase in child care from 2.4 to 3.0 hours.

The change in housework time is likely linked to the greater proportion of young people living at home who, generally, do less housework than those living on their own. However, findings for the total population show that there has been an overall decline in time spent on housework in Canada and the United States (Marshall 2006; Bianchi et al. 2000). Since the daily participation rate for housework has increased and the time participants spend on it has decreased, the average time spent on housework spread over the population has changed only slightly over the generations (from 1.3 hours in 1986 to 1.2 hours in 2010).

The increase in time spent on child care may be due to the fact that Generation Y parents have younger children at home. In 2010, among Generation Y parents, 56% had an infant (under age 2) to care for, compared with 48% for Generation X in 1998.[4]

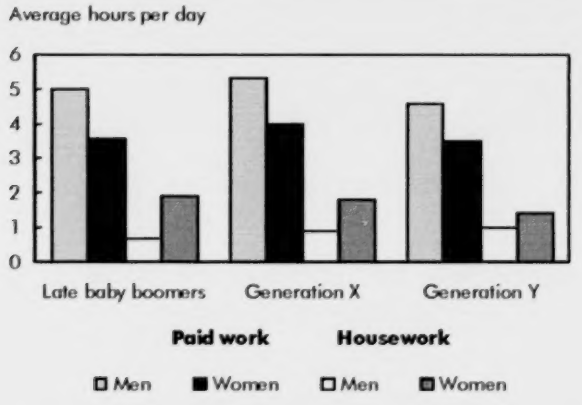
Although the global picture of generational change in paid and unpaid work appears nominal, trends by sex tell a different story. The remainder of this paper focuses on differences between men and women in paid work and housework among late baby boomers, and Generations X and Y. Housework is the only unpaid work activity selected since it makes up the bulk of all unpaid household work and, by necessity, many core activities such as meal preparation and clean-up, indoor cleaning and laundry are usually performed on a daily basis. Child care is an important topic but would require a separate, more in-depth analysis.

Work patterns most similar between Generation Y men and women

As shown, averaged over the population, time spent per day on paid work and housework for those age 20 to 29 has remained relatively stable over the three generations. However, hidden in these averages are differences between men and women, as well as a reduction in the magnitude of these differences over time. In terms of the daily participation rate and average time spent, male and female differences in both paid work and housework have steadily declined from 1986 to 2010.

In 1986, on average, late baby boomer men worked 1.4 more paid hours per day than women, while the difference in paid work among Generation Y men and women stood at 1.1 hours in 2010 (Chart B). In terms of housework,

Chart B Hours of paid work and housework the most alike for Generation Y men and women



Note: For the population age 20 to 29 in each generation, daily hours are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

women age 20 to 29 did 1.2 hours more per day than men in 1986, but only 0.4 hours more in 2010. Note that time spent on housework by participants has also narrowed between men and women—due entirely to a decrease in the time women spend on housework. In 1986, among those who did some housework on Diary Day, women did 2 hours 25 minutes of housework and men 1 hour 31 minutes; in 2010, women did 1 hour 54 minutes and men 1 hour 34 minutes (data not shown).

Similar to the findings on paid work hours, men's daily participation rate in paid work has also been consistently higher than women's—but again, the extent of the difference has declined with each time period. For example, there was a 12 percentage point difference in the paid work participation rate of late baby boomer men and women in 1986, and an 8 percentage point difference for those of Generation Y in 2010 (Chart C).

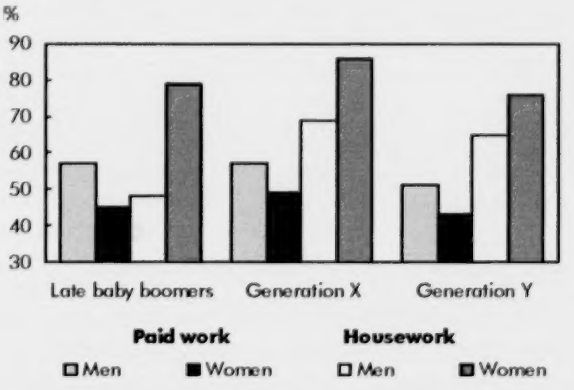
The narrowing of the gender gap in daily housework participation rates is the most noticeable. In 1986, 48% of late baby boomer men and 78% of women reported doing some housework on Diary Day; by 2010, 65% of Generation Y men of the same age range and 76% of women reported doing housework—a gap of 30 percentage points in 1986 and 11 percentage points in 2010.

Children have opposite effects on the paid work of men and women

Several factors can influence the degree of involvement in paid work and housework among young adults, including student and family status, having dependent children at home and living arrangements. Although more difficult to measure, cultural expectations and trends can also affect behaviour. In order to determine which factors are associated with time spent on paid work and housework, separate linear regression models were run for men and women from each generation.

Even though the difference has narrowed over time, in 2010 young Generation Y men spent more time on paid work than women (4 hours 35 minutes per day versus 3 hours 32 minutes, averaged over the population). However, many of the characteristics associated

Chart C Over time, participation in paid work and housework has also converged for men and women



Note: For the population age 20 to 29 in each generation, participation rates are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

Data source and definitions

Every year since 1985, the **General Social Survey (GSS)** has interviewed Canadians age 15 and over living in the 10 provinces on a wide range of issues. Using a 24-hour diary instrument, the GSS has collected detailed information on time use in 5 years (1986, 1992, 1998, 2005 and 2010). Individual activities are recorded sequentially over a 24-hour period, which is known as **Diary Day**. All activities are subsequently coded to a standard international classification. Each day of the week is sampled, and calculations from time use data are usually averaged over a 7-day period. While the 1986 survey collected data during the months of November and December only, all other cycles covered a 12-month period.

Since the GSS is a random-digit telephone survey and the frame consists of landline telephone numbers, households with cell phones only are excluded from the sample.

Target population: all respondents age 20 to 29 at the time of the 1986, 1998 and 2010 surveys, with sample counts of 2,400, 1,700 and 1,500, respectively. The age range and respective survey years cover the majority of late baby boomers, and Generation X and Generation Y when they were in their 20s (see *Three generations* for details).

Paid work: time spent on all activities related to a job or business. The time use surveys also include total time spent travelling to and from the workplace as well as unpaid work in a business and on a farm.

Unpaid household work: time spent on all household work and related activities including housework, child care and shopping for goods and services.

Housework: is one form of unpaid household work and is often divided into core and non-core activities—this study includes time spent on both. Core housework includes time spent on meal preparation, meal clean-up (doing the dishes, clearing the table), indoor cleaning (dusting, vacuuming) and laundry. Non-core work includes activities such as outdoor cleaning, mending or sewing, interior or exterior maintenance and repair, gardening, pet and plant care, and household administration.

Living with one or both parents: all those currently at home with one or both parents as well as those who are temporarily away at school or for seasonal work. Anyone temporarily absent is coded as living in the household if he or she spends at least 30 days of the year at home.

Dual earners: are defined as married or common-law couples in which the main activity of both partners in the previous 7 days was "working at a paid job or business."

Activity participation rate: the proportion of the population (or subpopulation) that reported spending some time on a particular activity on Diary Day. The participation rate is a daily rate and, unless otherwise specified, the rate is an average daily rate over a 7-day week (average of the daily rates for Sunday-through-Saturday Diary Days).

Average time spent on specific activities of the population or subpopulation: the total time all respondents reported spending on a given activity divided by the population, and averaged over a 7-day week. The average time spent on activities for participants refers to the average time spent only for those who participated in the activity on Diary Day, but again averaged over 7 days.

Linear regression models: were used to examine the relationship between time spent (number of minutes) on paid work and housework on Diary Day and selected explanatory variables. Models were run for both men and women from each generation. Multicollinearity diagnostic tests were run for all models and bootstrap weights were used to adjust for the survey design.

with the number of hours spent in paid work are the same for both men and women and are constant across the generations. For example, when controls for other factors were taken into account, students were found to do significantly less paid work than non-students—not a surprising finding since attending school is the main activity of students (Table 3). However, over time students have increased their participation in paid work on Diary Day, confirming other findings that show an increasing proportion of full-time students who combine school and employment.[5]

For Generation Y men and women, having more than a high school education had a significant positive influence on time spent on paid work. Having more education likely helped with finding or keeping a job during 2010—a recovery year in the economic cycle. During the 2008/2009 economic downturn, job loss was particularly high among youth and those with a high school education or less (LaRochelle-Côté and Gilmore 2009).

The proportion of women age 20 to 29 with more than a high school education has increased substantially across the generations. In 2010, 83% of Generation Y women had more than a high school education, compared with 56% of late baby boomer women in 1986 (data not shown). Women with higher levels of education have higher employment rates and are more likely to work full time (Chung 2006).

Table 3 Average time spent on paid work for late baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y at ages 20 to 29, by sex

	Late baby boomers		Generation X		Generation Y	
	Performed paid work on Diary Day	Average time on paid work	Performed paid work on Diary Day	Average time on paid work	Performed paid work on Diary Day	Average time on paid work
	%	hours: minutes	%	hours: minutes	%	hours: minutes
All men	**57**	**5:02**	**57**	**5:18**	**51**	**4:35**
Age						
20 to 24 (ref.)	52	4:32	47	4:24	49	4:07
25 to 29	62	5:31	67	6:08	53	5:03
Education						
High school diploma or less (ref.)	64	4:34	62	5:05	44	4:25
More than a high school diploma	53	5:40	56	6:07	53	4:37*
Lives with one or both parents						
Yes (ref.)	49	4:07	52	4:08	47	3:54
No	61	5:29	48	6:02*	57	5:32
Family status						
Single (ref.)	51	4:21	53	4:50	47	4:02
Married no children	63	5:41	70	6:31	62	5:51
Married with children	67	6:03	67	6:23	61	6:16
School attendance						
Student (ref.)	13	:51	18	1:09	18	:39
Not a student	66	5:49*	68	6:20*	59	5:29*
Immigrant status						
Immigrant (ref.)	62	5:45	49	5:01	45	3:59
Canadian-born	57	4:57	60	5:23	52	4:41
All women	**45**	**3:38**	**49**	**4:01**	**43**	**3:32**
Age						
20 to 24 (ref.)	44	3:27	49	3:57	42	3:25
25 to 29	46	3:48	48	4:04	44	3:39
Education						
High school diploma or less (ref.)	43	3:23	43	3:28	31	2:14
More than a high school diploma	47	3:50	51	4:11	45	3:48*
Lives with one or both parents						
Yes (ref.)	53	3:23	52	3:49	47	3:50
No	43	4:32	48	4:04	40	3:19
Family status						
Single (ref.)	53	4:31	53	4:14	46	3:52
Married no children	55	4:23*	64	5:35	58	5:02
Married with children	29	2:02*	29	2:20*	23	1:33*
School attendance						
Student (ref.)	13	:48	27	1:45	21	1:30
Not a student	50	4:05*	53	4:27*	49	4:03*
Immigrant status						
Immigrant (ref.)	52	3:30	38	3:21	35	3:09
Canadian-born	44	4:30	51	4:06	44	3:36

* statistically significant difference from the reference group (ref.) at $p < 0.05$
Note: For the population, time per day and participation rates are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

Family-related variables had significant effects on the time women spent on paid work in 1986, 1998 and 2010, but not on that of men. The paid work hours for married men with children tended to be higher than those for single men and married men without children, whereas the opposite was true for women. After controls for other factors were included, married women with children did significantly fewer paid work hours than single women in each generation. Late baby boomer married women with no children did significantly less paid work than single women, but this was not the case for their Generation X and Y counterparts.

Generation Y mothers spent considerably less time per day at paid work (1 hour 33 minutes) than late baby boomers (2 hours 2 minutes) and Generation Xers (2 hours 20 minutes) even though, overall, the labour force participation rate of mothers with young children has increased steadily over the past two decades (Luffman 2006). The difference may be linked to changes in publicly insured paid leave and the incidence of having infants at home,[6] thus increasing the chance of Generation Y women being on leave at the time of the survey. Generation Y women are entitled to up to one year of combined paid maternity and parental leave after birth, whereas when Generation X women were age 20 to 29, 6 months of paid maternity and parental leave were available, and for late baby boomer women it was 4 months of paid maternity leave.

Married women doing less housework and married men more

Similar to paid work, certain factors are associated with participation in and the average time spent on housework across generations for both men and women. Consistently, students and those who spent any time at a job on Diary Day did significantly less housework than non-students and those who did not do any paid work (Table 4). Generations X and Y men age 25 to 29 did significantly more housework than those age 20 to 24, as did those living on their own in 1986 and 2010.

On average, education level had less effect on men's involvement in housework than women's. After controls for other factors were taken into account, in 1986 and 2010 women with higher education did significantly less housework than women with a high school diploma. Although higher-income households (associated with higher levels of education) are more likely to hire domestic help (Marshall 2006), this activity is not likely a factor in the differences found here. Only a small percentage of employed women age 20 to 29 were in households that purchased cleaning services (7% in 2010).[7]

Compared with being single, marriage and children significantly increase the average time spent on housework for men in Generation X and women in all generations. Although not significantly different from those not in a couple, Generation Y married men, with and without children, spent similar time on housework to Generation X men. Overall, the difference in housework time between men and women in couples has become progressively smaller with each passing generation. For example, in 1986, late baby boomer married women without children did 1 hour 6 minutes more housework work per day than married men without children, while, in 2010, Generation Y women did 19 minutes more than men.

But unlike paid work, there is an opposite trend for the average time spent on housework by sex, which shows increases in men's involvement in housework by all personal and demographic characteristics, and a steady decrease in women's. Averaged over the population, Generation Y men did 1 hour 1 minute of housework per day, which was up from 44 minutes for late baby boomers in 1986 and from 53 minutes for Generation X in 1998. Meanwhile, Generation Y women did 1 hour 26 minutes of housework per day, down from 1 hour 54 minutes for late baby boomers and 1 hour 47 minutes for Generation Xers.

Young men may be increasing their involvement in housework due to cultural expectations and socialization. Research has shown that married men who had grown up in households with an employed mother spend more time on housework than married men who did not have an employed mother (Gupta 2006). Furthermore, as noted previously, over the past two decades time spent on housework among teenage boys and girls has become more uniform (Marshall 2007).

Work patterns more similar in young dual-earner couples

The reduced difference in the time spent on housework between young adult men and women may also be linked to the change in paid work hours within all families. Dual earners have been the predominant family form since the 1980s, but women continue to increase their proportional contribution of paid work

Table 4 Average time spent on housework for late baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y at ages 20 to 29, by sex

	Late baby boomers		Generation X		Generation Y	
	Performed housework on Diary Day	Average time on housework	Performed housework on Diary Day	Average time on housework	Performed housework on Diary Day	Average time on housework
	%	hours: minutes	%	hours: minutes	%	hours: minutes
All men	**48**	**:44**	**69**	**:53**	**65**	**1:01**
Age						
20 to 24 (ref.)	43	:31	65	:36	60	:44
25 to 29	54	:56	73	1:08*	70	1:17*
Education						
High school diploma or less (ref.)	47	:43	72	1:03	60	:57
More than a high school diploma	49	:44	68	:46*	65	1:12
Lives with one or both parents						
Yes (ref.)	38	:30	60	:38	59	:44
No	53	:50*	74	1:02	73	1:24*
Paid work on Diary Day						
None (ref.)	56	1:03	74	1:15	66	1:22
Less than 8 hours	53	:49*	67	:48*	75	:54*
8 or more hours	39	:23*	63	:32*	60	:36*
Family status						
Single (ref.)	44	:36	66	:40	62	:51
Married no children	52	:52	72	1:08*	73	1:25
Married with children	55	1:00	80	1:39*	71	1:30
School attendance						
Student (ref.)	37	:21	62	:31	61	:40
Not a student	50	:48*	70	:55*	65	1:04*
Immigrant status						
Immigrant (ref.)	48	:43	62	:45	53	:44
Canadian-born	48	:44	70	:51	67	1:04*
All women	**78**	**1:54**	**86**	**1:47**	**76**	**1:26**
Age						
20 to 24 (ref.)	73	1:32	83	1:30	68	1:06
25 to 29	84	2:16	88	2:02	83	1:46
Education						
High school diploma or less (ref.)	83	2:25	87	2:20	87	2:06
More than a high school diploma	74	1:28*	86	1:36	73	1:17*
Lives with one or both parents						
Yes (ref.)	58	:53	75	:59	64	:51
No	84	2:20	89	2:01*	84	1:54
Paid work on Diary Day						
None (ref.)	84	2:30	89	2:21	79	1:49
Less than 8 hours	77	1:40*	87	1:37*	79	1:22
8 or more hours	67	:53*	80	:57*	67	:42*
Family status						
Single (ref.)	61	:54	77	1:10	66	:51
Married no children	82	1:58*	91	1:55*	83	1:44*
Married with children	94	3:01*	94	2:43*	93	2:29*
School attendance						
Student (ref.)	59	:54	77	:54	66	:45
Not a student	81	2:02*	88	1:56*	78	1:35*
Immigrant status						
Immigrant (ref.)	73	1:28	76	1:31	67	1:14
Canadian-born	79	1:57	88	1:47	77	1:27

* statistically significant difference from the reference group (ref.) at $p < 0.05$
Note: For the population, time per day and participation rates are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1986, 1998 and 2010.

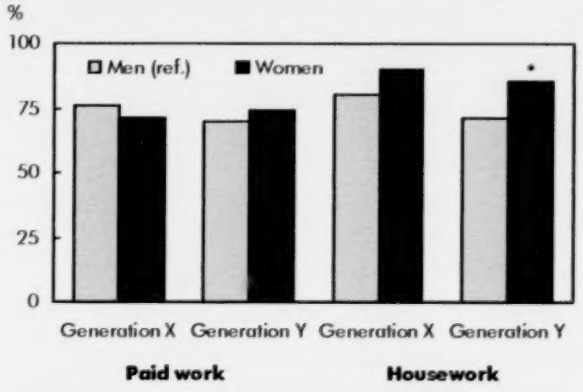
within such couples (Marshall 2009). In tandem, as women have increased their hours of paid work, men have steadily increased their share of household work, which may, in turn, be changing attitudes towards the division of labour.

Among young adults from Generations X and Y, only a minority were part of a couple and an even smaller proportion were part of a dual-earner couple.[8] However, the populations of dual earners are nonetheless large enough to broadly examine the overall spousal contribution of paid work and housework hours.

Most dual-earner men and women from Generations X and Y reported participating in paid work and housework on Diary Day. In 1998 and 2010, the participation rate in paid work ranged from 70% and 76% for both sexes (Chart D). Since the participation rate was averaged over the week, the paid work rate was lower than that for housework since it is usually performed for a maximum of 5 days per week, while meal preparation or cleaning, for example, is often done daily. In both generations, women have a higher daily housework participation rate than men—with a 10 percentage point difference for Gen Xers in 1998 and a 14-point difference for Generation Y in 2010.[9]

In terms of average time spent on paid work, Generation X women in dual-earner couples did 6.4 hours per day in 1998 and Generation Y women did 6.7 hours in 2010 (Table 5). These 1998 and 2010 averages represent 48% and 47%, respectively, of the total paid work time done by couples and, compared with another GSS time use study, are proportionally higher than what dual-earner women age 25 to 54 did in 1992 (45%) and 2005 (46%) (Marshall 2006).

Chart D Daily participation in paid work and housework similar in dual-earner couples



* statistically significant difference from the reference group (ref.) at $p < 0.05$
Note: For the population age 20 to 29 in each generation, participation rates are averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998 and 2010.

Table 5 Average daily time spent on paid work and housework for individuals in a dual-earner couple at ages 20 to 29

	Paid work			Housework			Wife's proportion	
	Both sexes	Men (ref.)	Women	Both sexes	Men (ref.)	Women	Paid work	Housework
	hours						%	
Generation X	**13.3**	**6.9**	**6.4**	**3.2**	**1.3**	**1.9***	**48**	**59**
No children at home	14.0	7.2	6.8	3.3	1.4	1.9	48	57
Has children	11.7	6.4	5.4	3.2	1.2	2.0	46	61
Generation Y	**14.1**	**7.5**	**6.7**	**3.1**	**1.5**	**1.7**	**47**	**53**
No children at home	13.5	6.5	7.0	3.2	1.7	1.5	52	48
Has children	14.1	9.0	5.1E*	3.4	1.2	2.1E	36	64

* statistically significant difference from the reference group (ref.) at $p < 0.05$
Note: For the population, time per day is averaged over 7 days.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998 and 2010.

On the other hand, women's time spent on housework, relative to the total time done by the couple, has fallen. Dual-earner women from Generation Y did 53% of the total housework done by couples, down from 59% for dual-earner Generation X women. Again, these proportions were smaller than those for dual-earner women age 25 to 54, who, in 2006, did 62% of the total housework done by the couple (Marshall 2006). However, similar to the findings for older dual-earner couples, when dependent children are present, women's contribution to a couple's total paid work time becomes smaller, while the proportional contribution to housework becomes larger.[10]

Conclusion

Major life events of young adults age 20 to 29 are generally the same from one generation to the next, but the timing of events can change. Overall, compared with late baby boomers (born from 1957 to 1966) and those in Generation X (1969 to 1978), those in Generation Y (1981 to 1990) were the least likely to be married or living common-law and have children. Those in Generation Y were also the most likely to be still living at home with at least one parent. Also, both Generations X and Y were more likely to be attending school than late baby boomers.

Despite the socioeconomic changes in the characteristics of the three generations, participation in and time spent on paid work has remained relatively stable—with about 50% working at a job on any given day and spending between 8.5 and 8.8 hours at work. In contrast, involvement in daily housework has increased over time (70% in 2010) but the time spent on it has declined—from 2.1 hours per day in 1986 to 1.7 hours in 2010. This trend in housework is a result of an increase in the percentage of men participating in housework and a decrease in the time women spend on it.

For all generations, students spent significantly less time on paid work than non-students. However, higher educational attainment was linked to more paid work for both men and women of Generation Y. Also, while children had no effect on men's paid work time, their presence significantly lowered the hours of paid work for women.

Factors associated with spending significantly less time on housework include being a student, doing paid work on Diary Day, and, for men, being younger and living at home with at least one parent. Also, being in a couple, with or without children, significantly increased time spent on housework for men from Generation X and women from all three generations.

Progressively, from late baby boomers to those in Generation Y, there has been an increasing similarity in young men's and women's involvement in paid work and housework. However, despite the narrowing of the differences, compared with women, men continue to have an overall greater involvement in paid work and a lesser involvement in housework. For example, among late baby boomers, men spent 1.4 hours more per day on paid work than women, while Generation Y men did 1.1 hours more; late baby boomer women did 1.2 hours more housework per day than men and Generation Y women did 0.4 hours more.

An examination of men and women age 20 to 29 in dual-earner couples confirms the trend that spouses are increasingly sharing economic and domestic responsibilities. In 2010, dual-earner Generation Y women did 47% of couples' total paid work and 53% of couples' housework. However, also similar to past trends, having dependent children at home tends to alter the division of labour within young dual-earner couples.

Perspectives

Notes

1. The baby boom in Canada extended over a 20-year period and is often divided into two groups and described as the first and second wave, or the front and back end of the boom. For simplicity, this study refers to the second half of the boom as 'late baby boomers.'
2. For the remainder of this paper, the term 'married' refers to those who are married or living common-law.
3. The extent of the increase suggests a real social trend of young adults remaining at home longer and is consistent with 2006 Census findings, however, another factor may be involved (Milan et al. 2007). It is likely that the number of young adults living on their own is underrepresented in the 2010 survey since many of them live in cell-phone-only households which are excluded from the sampling frame (see *Data source and definitions*).
4. Detailed ages of children are not available from the 1986 survey for late baby boomers.
5. Since the late 1990s, almost 50% of full-time postsecondary students age 15 to 24 were employed during the school year, up from 35% in 1985/1986 (Marshall 2010; Usalcas and Bowlby 2006).

6. Among Generation Y mothers, 59% had at least one child under the age of 2 at home compared with 46% of Generation X mothers (data not available for late baby boomers).
7. The sample size is too small to examine purchasing differences by level of education.
8. It is not possible to examine late baby boomers in dual-earner couples since the 1986 General Social Survey did not ask about the main activity of the respondent's spouse.
9. At 0.054, the probability value of the 1998 difference was close to the < 0.05 significance level.
10. Many of the differences in time spent on paid work and housework between men and women with children at home would likely be significant with a larger sample size. The estimates have relatively large coefficients of variation.

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